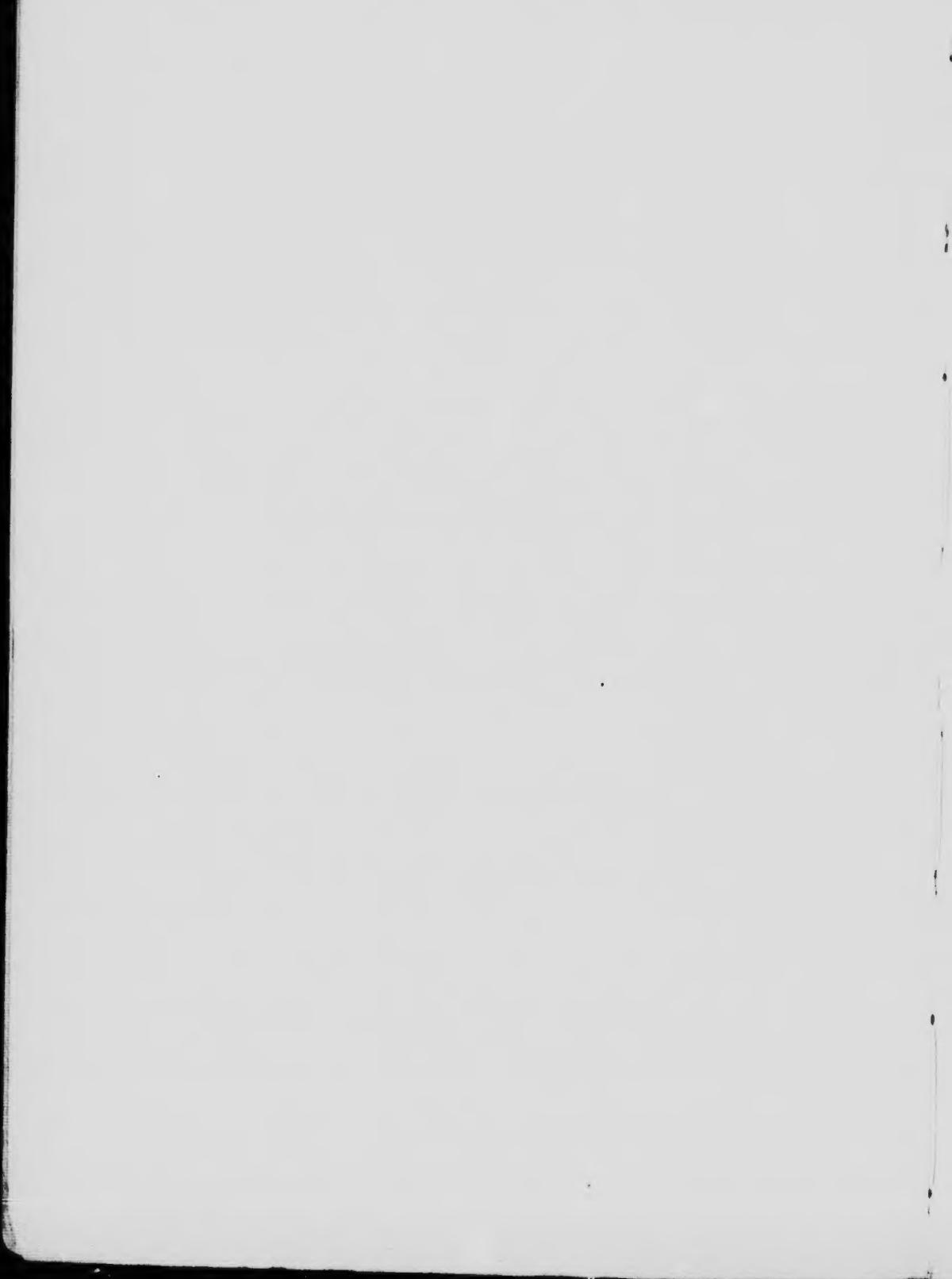


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# THE LORD'S SUPPER



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BY

GEORGE C. PIDGEON, D.D.

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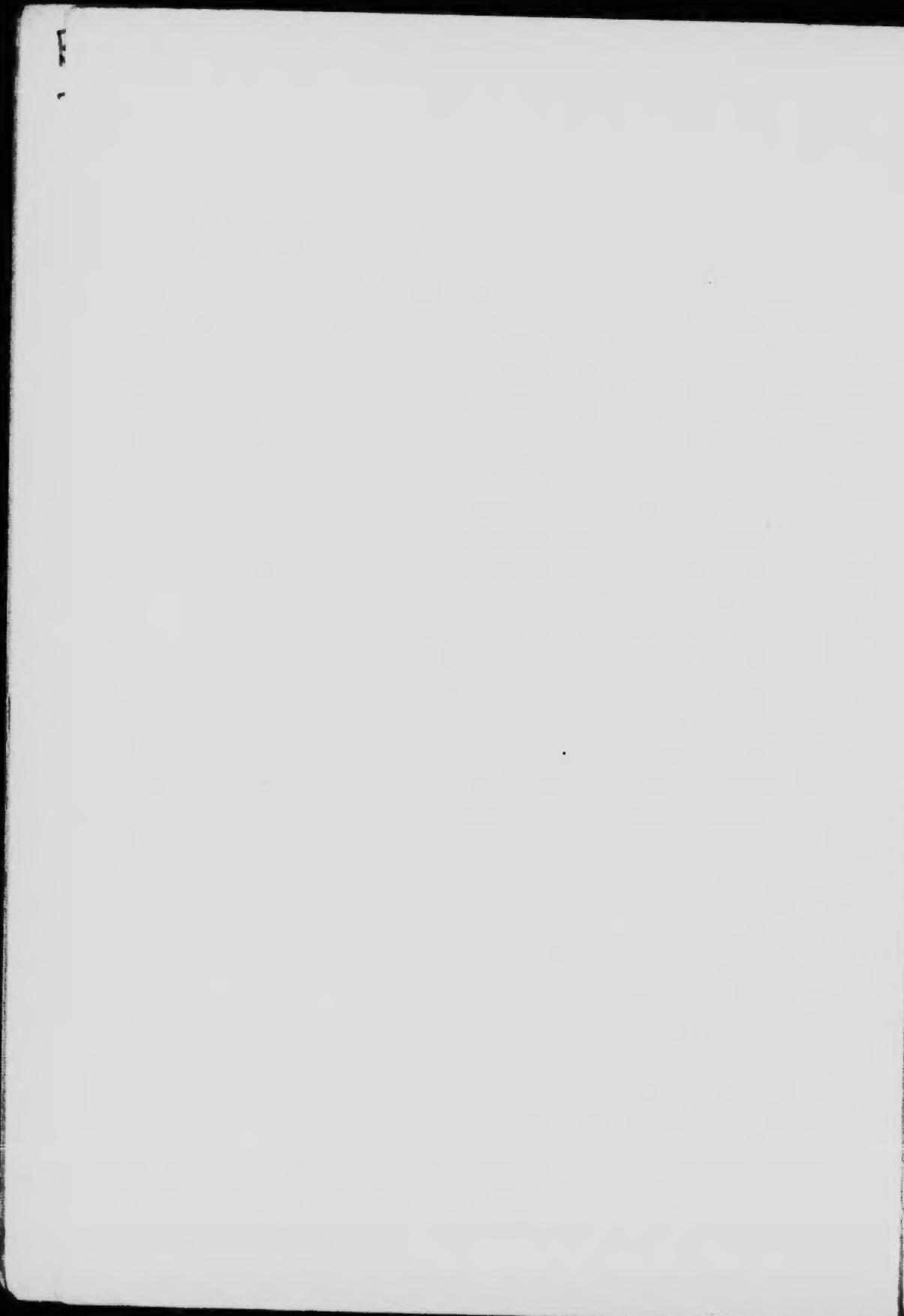
## INTRODUCTION

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A glance through this little work at once makes it clear that it differs from other manuals on the same subject, in that it is an exposition of the Biblical passages relating to the Lord's Supper, rather than a topical or devotional treatment of the ordinance. Yet the passages are grouped in such a way as to make the exposition consecutive. It is a work that may with advantage be placed by pastors or sessions in the hands of new communicants on making the profession of their faith, or, better still, made the basis of study in a communicant's class. Dr. Pidgeon's careful and thorough scholarship makes him a safe guide in interpretation, and his earnest evangelical spirit keeps his exposition in close touch with genuine religious experience. As these are the two main avenues into the right apprehension of Christian truth, faithful adhesion to them ought to lead to a clearer understanding of this great, central institution of the church, and to a more profitable participation in it. Except in so far as it is understood, there can be little spiritual benefit derived from this or any religious rite, however solemn and imposing it may otherwise be.

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PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE,  
MONTREAL, 1906.



# THE LORD'S SUPPER

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## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.—Matt. 26: 26-29.

The accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper are all very brief. They give the barest outline of what must have been the most solemn service in the world's history. But every word of the various accounts is pregnant with meaning and freighted with emotion. It was an hour fraught with great issues when Christ, about to suffer for the world's sin, establishes this service by which His death might be commemorated and its benefits conveyed to believers.

By combining the different accounts we may see the points which the writers held to be most significant. They all emphasize the bread broken and eaten as representing Christ's body broken for men and partaken of by them. They unite in speaking of the cup as Christ's blood of the covenant, or the new covenant in His blood. All quote the Saviour's

saying that it foreshadows a future feast in the Kingdom of God. Luke and Paul speak of it as a memorial of Christ. Thus it points both backward and forward; back to the death of the Redeemer, the foundation of the world's salvation, and forward to the feast of love which will mark the consummation of that salvation.

### I. THE CONNECTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER WITH THE PASSOVER.

"As they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed."—Matt. 26:26. "For our passover also hath been sacrificed, *even* Christ: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—I Cor. 5: 7-8.

The connection between the Lord's Supper and the Passover is both historical and doctrinal. The Synoptists seem to teach that it was at the conclusion of the Paschal meal that the Lord's Supper was instituted. There is difference of opinion as to whether the Passover lamb was actually killed and eaten, or not, but at all events it was during the feast of which the Passover was the leading feature that the event we are considering took place. Then in the Church's doctrine the relation between the two is still more intimate.

The Passover held the place in the Old Testament which the Lord's Supper does in the New. The former foreshadowed what the latter commemorates. The Paschal Lamb was a type of Christ, representing His death for the world's deliverance. He is our "Paschal Lamb by God appointed." Clearer still is the reference of the Communion feast to His death

for sin. Both, therefore, are symbols of the one sacrifice. The prophetic rite will cast much light on the commemorative rite and on the sacrifice to which both refer.

The Paschal Lamb was a substitute, and because a substitute a ransom. The lamb suffered instead of the first-born, and by its blood, sprinkled on the door-posts, the first-born was saved from death. His only security lay in taking refuge behind the blood. It was, therefore, a redemption which had to be personally appropriated to be effective. This came as a shock and surprise to Israel. Hitherto they had been immune from the plagues the Egyptians suffered. The boils and blains had not touched their persons, the murrain had not attacked their cattle, the darkness had not entered their dwellings. But to this, the crowning plague inflicted for their deliverance, they were exposed, and it was only by availing themselves of the means provided for their security that their first-born could be protected from the destroying angel's sword. Israel was thus taught that the salvation to which they were not entitled by nature they might obtain by grace if they would fulfil the conditions laid down by God. After that Israel was known as a ransomed people. They were God's chosen nation, but the ground of their election was their redemption. It is the ransomed of the Lord who "shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."

How full this is of instruction on the meaning of the Lord's Supper and the value of the event it

commemorates! Christ is at once our ransom and our Redeemer because He became our substitute. It was through His death that He became a ransom. The blood means the life, and in the shedding of His blood, life was given for life—His life for our lives. This sacrificial element undoubtedly enters into the Lord's Supper. All the Synoptists emphasize that the cup is the new covenant in Christ's blood which is shed for many, and Matthew adds that it was shed for the remission of sins. The new covenant which Jeremiah foretold included among its blessings the complete remission of sins. Now, in the Lord's Supper we commemorate the sacrifice by which our pardon was secured, and not only so, but we appropriate the results of that sacrifice to ourselves. By Christ's death our salvation was made possible; by our acceptance of Him it was made actual, and by partaking of the sacred symbols we accept anew the blessings thus procured for us. Henceforth we have no thought of ourselves but as God's redeemed ones; we stand before God on no other basis, for none other is possible, and we live in the world as examples of how the cleansing blood can purify and renew the human soul.

## II. THE EVENTS TO WHICH THE LORD'S SUPPER REFERS

"This do in remembrance of me."—Luke 22: 19. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come."—I Cor. 11: 26.

It points backward to the Lord's death and forward to His second coming. It is therefore both a memorial and a prophecy.

1. *It is a memorial of Christ.* He longed to be remembered, and this brings Him repeatedly to our minds in the most vivid manner possible.

In this it acts on the same principle as other celebrations. The first of July commemorates the birth of the Dominion as a nation; the Fourth of July celebrations are held in honor of the founding of the American Republic. Recently the whole British Empire observed Trafalgar Day in honor of the great victory by which England was freed from the menace of Napoleon's aggression. By participating in these celebrations men feed the fire of their patriotism and nerve themselves for any sacrifices which their country's welfare may require. These, however, are mainly memorials of events; the Lord's Supper is the memorial not only of an event but of a person. When these other celebrations are held in honor of a person, as Nelson was honored on Trafalgar Day, they commemorate one who has passed from the scene of his triumphs, but when we "do this in remembrance of Christ," we glorify one who though He died once yet lives now and is mighty to save. He is present at every Communion Feast, and in addition to calling His past sacrifice to mind we reiterate our vows of allegiance to Him as our present Leader and King.

This commemoration involves gratitude for the salvation provided. This is the meaning of the term "Eucharist." When our Lord took the bread, He gave thanks before He brake it. What a prayer that must have been! Think of the sacrifice for

humanity's sin, filled with thanksgiving in the shadow of the Cross! For what did He give thanks? For the souls whom His death would save? For the privilege of saving even at such a cost, the multitude whom no man could number, and whom He saw drawn to His cross in the ages still to come. Surely faith never assayed a loftier flight than when, in the face of the tragedy of the universe, its victim could give thanks to God for the outcome of His sufferings.

For what do we give thanks in commemorating this sacrifice? For the full salvation thus provided for cleansing through His blood, for renewal by His spirit, for the Saviour's constant companionship, for guidance, sustenance and protection even to our journey's end, for the feast provided for us in the Kingdom of God. If we thus enter into the spirit of the service, our memorial of Christ's death will be a Eucharist indeed.

*2. The Lord's Supper points forward to the second coming.*

"Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."—Mark 14: 25. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come."—I Cor. 11: 26.

As Evans says:—"Ye do proclaim down the centuries as they roll to their terminus the Advent. The Lord's death ye thus declare onwards until the day of His coming, when the kingdom long ago bequeathed (Luke 22: 29) shall be bestowed, and the Inheritance long ago released by the death of the Testator (Heb. 9: 16) shall become a possession

forever, and the *Testator* Himself shall appear as *Executor*."

We thus declare to all men our belief in the Lord's return. Amid the church's persecutions and tribulations she proclaims to an indifferent or hostile world her expectation of her Lord's appearing in power, when He will right all wrongs, and finally subjugate His enemies and establish His kingdom. In the church's darkest hours this hope has burned most brightly, and her deepest comfort has been derived from the feast that fed it.

We thus shew what the Advent means to the believer. For him it will not be a time of terror. Its significance is set forth under the figure of a banquet, at which the Lord and His people will drink in glory of the fruit of the mystical vine. It will, therefore, be a time of unbroken joy in the immediate presence of the Lord.

### III. THE BLESSINGS WHICH THE LORD'S SUPPER REPRESENTS AND CONVEYS.

It is more than a memorial. It is both a symbol and an avenue of grace. It not only typifies certain blessings as existing and available, but it actually brings them to the believer's soul.

The benefits thus received through the Lord's Supper may be divided into three classes. Each of these will be given a chapter to itself in our study of the passages which deal with them. For the present it will be sufficient to consider their significance and notice their relations with each other.

*1. The union of believers in Christ is thus set forth.*

"Seeing that there is one bread, we, the many, are one body: for we all partake of that one bread."—I Cor. 10: 17.

The Lord's Supper is a feast, and a feast is not for one but for many. "Communion" is impossible unless heart joins to heart in adoration of our common Lord. Prayer may be secret, Bible-study may be private, but "communion" must be public. The blessings it brings cannot be received by the soul in solitude. In building up a spiritual character, certain blessings come from the individual's contact with God, but certain others are received through our brethren in the faith, or rather are communicated to us by virtue of our union with them. "Sacramental grace," if such it may be called, is one of the latter. Each soul must be in touch with God, but must also be united with others or the benefits will not flow. Before one can receive an electric shock, there must first be connection with the battery, and next a circuit. One's connection with the battery may be perfect, but unless the circuit be complete, no move of the electricity will be felt. Now our union in spirit with our brethren completes the circuit by which the grace of God is communicated to the soul. The Lord's Supper is the highest of the means of grace, and it is significant that it is given only to the church as a spiritual unity, and in no case to isolated individuals. Repentance and forgiveness must be settled between the soul and God alone, but the farther we advance

in the Christian life the more closely must we be drawn to our brethren, and the richest blessings of grace are given only to those who are capable of heart-to-heart communion with one another and unitedly with Christ.

*2. Christ is represented as the food of the soul.*

"Jesus took bread and blessed and brake it; and He gave to the disciples, and said, take, eat; this is my body."—Matt. 26: 26.

Christ by His death not only atoned for sin, but became available for the soul's support. There are two sides to Christ's sacrifice—the atonement it makes for sin, and the spiritual nourishment it provides for the soul. When Christ says in John 10: 15: "I lay down my life for the sheep," He refers to His death as a ransom from sin. But when He says in John 6: 51: "I am the living bread which came down out of Heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world," He describes His death as providing spiritual nourishment for the souls He has redeemed. Many of the Jewish sacrifices were eaten after they were offered, in part by the priests, but in the main by the offerers. The sin offering, however, was burned entire. Not even those who served at the altar were allowed to taste of it. But Christ, our Sin offering, lays Himself upon the altar, not only as the propitiation for our sins, but as the food of the soul. According to Westcott, this is the significance of Hebrews 13: 10: "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." He writes:

"The great sacrifice for sin on the Day of Atonement was wholly consumed. Though they 'who served the tabernacle' 'were partakers with the altar' ordinarily, even those who were most privileged had no right to eat of this offering. But Christ, who is our sacrifice for sin, the perfect antitype of that symbol, is our food also. He is our atonement; and He is our support. He died as the sin-offering 'outside the gate,' and He lives to be our life by the communication of Himself."

This is the main truth brought out in the Lord's Supper. "Take, eat; this is my body." By being broken it became available for us. By taking and eating we appropriate it for ourselves. Christ thus requires our co-operation in the sacrifice. He offered Himself for the whole world, but we must receive Him as individuals. And what bread is to the physical life, the body of Christ is to the spiritual life. Eating the bread means, therefore, the spiritual assimilation of Christ. When the offer of salvation came to us, we accepted Christ and confessed Him. At the Lord's table we do in action what we formerly did in word. If we have the spiritual discernment to recognize the Lord's body in the symbols, we actually receive Him then with all the spiritual benefits He brings.

### 3. *The cup is the new covenant in Christ's blood.*

"This is My blood of the covenant which is shed for many."—  
Mark 14: 24. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood."—  
I Cor. 11: 25.

This truth is fully developed in Hebrews 9. The new covenant is based on Christ's blood. By drinking

the symbol in faith we receive the benefits of the sacrifice. As one writer explains it: "In the great sacrifice never to be repeated it was *outpoured once* for the potential remission of the sins of all mankind; in the sacraments it is *applied often* that the potential remission may become actual."

This sacrament is the seal as well as this covenant. As a sign it represents the blessings of the covenant. But as a seal and confirms the covenant with the individual. A seal is equivalent to a signature, only it is more stately and solemn way of authenticating closing up a document. When an agreement is made, the individual's honor and property are pledged to observance, and the law of the land will hold him to it. The sacrament is God's signature or seal to His covenant. He thereby pledges himself to the fulfilment of its terms. Paul says in Rom. 11, that the rite of circumcision was given to Abraham as a seal of the righteousness which he had by faith. It marked God's definite acceptance of him on ground. So when we observe the sacraments we have received God's seal to His covenant. This does not make Him more willing to save us, but it does increase our faith. We have, through this outward sign, a claim on His grace to which our weak faith may cling, and assurance becomes thereby doubly sure.

But the other side of the covenant is equally binding. If in giving the sacrament God pledges Himself to us, by receiving it we pledge ourselves to Him.

The *sacramentum* was the oath by which Roman soldiers bound themselves to their commanders and their country as they went forth to war. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we bind ourselves to eternal fidelity to God by the most sacred of all obligations, taken in the symbols of the Saviour's blood. In olden times the ratification of a covenant was associated with the shedding of blood, and what was written in blood was supposed to be indelible. Nothing can ever absolve us from our obligation to Christ, and we renew our vows of allegiance every time we partake at His table.

These things indicate the distinctive blessing that is received at the Lord's table. Each means of grace brings the soul a benefit peculiarly its own. The study of the Word builds up character as nothing else can. Its truths, learned and assimilated, become virtue; its principles become principle. Private prayer brings us into the closest possible relations with God. There is an enthusiasm, inspiration, and spirit of fellowship in public worship that cannot be found elsewhere. So the Lord's Supper imparts a grace peculiarly its own; or rather it brings grace to the soul in a peculiar way. As Robert Bruce shewed, writing three centuries ago, we get no different thing through the sacrament than we get through the Word. Because, through the preaching of the Word we receive Christ, and no higher blessing than He is can anyone obtain. But we get the same thing more fully. We get a firmer grip of Christ through our use of these symbols. The

value of His death to the soul is made more real than it could be otherwise. We realize our unity with each other, we enter into the covenant, and we nourish our souls on Christ as is possible in no other means of grace.

## COMMUNION

"Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they which eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? What say I then? that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?"—I Cor. 10: 14-22.

Paul is here warning the Corinthians against attending idol feasts and eating things offered to idols. His argument here is that worship, whether true or false, implies fellowship with both the worshippers and the object worshipped. It is as if he said, If you enter into the spirit of the idol feast you will have communion with the idolaters and with the demons whom the idols represent. Therefore their spirit will enter into you. The possibility of this is illustrated by the fellowship of believers at the Lord's table. There the very life and nature of Christ enter into you as you jointly hold communion with Him. The same thing will occur if you enter into the spirit of an idol feast. Its spirit will possess you. Now you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. If you come to the Lord's table, and His spirit enters into you, and then go to the idol's table and the spirit of the demons enters

into you, and thus you try to combine in your own soul the two opposite spirits you will provoke the fierce jealousy of God and bring upon yourselves His wrath.

His argument throws much light on the nature of our worship at the Lord's table and on the blessings we there receive.

### I. THE MEANING OF "COMMUNION."

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?"

"*Communion*" is the key-word of the passage. It means joint participation in some one element. It must be a participation into which we enter heart and soul before it can be communion. Sanday says it is "an act of communion at once with the deity worshipped, and of the worshippers with one another." Evans defines it as "the fellowship of persons with persons in one and the same object."

In order to apprehend the force of the word it will be necessary to trace its different uses in the New Testament. The original *κοινωνία* is variously rendered—"communion," "fellowship," "contribution" and "distribution." In all these different phases the one central thought is that certain things are held in common spiritually. Or as J. Armitage Robinson puts it: "It is used in relation to the Christian Society to express the idea of the fellowship in which it is united, and the acts of fellowship in which the idea is realized."\*

\*Prof. J. Armitage Robinson's discussion of this word in Hasting's Bible Dictionary is admirable, and to it the writer acknowledges his indebtedness.

1. In Acts 2: 42, 44, we find the idea illustrated. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship." "And all that believed were together and had all things common." The words here rendered "fellowship" and "common" are different parts of the same root. The community of goods was an expression of community of spirit. The disciples had just received the Pentecostal blessing. They were rejoicing together in their new-found life and light and power. The richest experiences of grace they were enjoying together. Each was moved by feelings, motives and aims that the others shared in and perfectly understood. They resolved that they should have all things in common. If one lacked the others shared his need, and he shared their plenty. If one prospered the others enjoyed with him the benefits of his success. If one received new experiences of grace, or was the instrument by whom some new wonder was wrought, he communicated it to the others and they praised God with him, and were put in the way of obtaining it also. We can thus see what "communion" meant to them. All hearts felt the same emotions, and these emotions, expressed in worship, blended together, as different fires join in one flame, and as different streams unite in one river. They were one in heart and soul as truly as ever human beings can be one, and in their oneness in Christ they found fulness of joy.

2. In a number of passages Paul speaks of giving to the poor as "communion" or "communication."

It is striking that he never uses the word "money" in these connections. The outward gift was the manifestation of an inward disposition, and it is on the spiritual state which prompts the service that he lays emphasis. He values all such donations mainly for the love and confidence which they cultivate in both giver and receiver. This is particularly so in connection with the contribution made by the Gentile churches to the poor in Jerusalem. In Rom. 15: 26 and II Cor. 9: 13 he calls it a "communion," and in II Cor. 8: 4 a "grace and communion." His idea in these passages was this: The Gentiles have participated in the great blessings of salvation which the Jews at the first received. Now, if the Jews shared their spiritual riches with the Gentiles who were impoverished for eternity, it is fitting that the Gentiles should share their material abundance with the Jews who are now in temporal want. And the greatest good which Paul expected from this service was that the mutual dislike and distrust which had arisen between the two branches of the church should be broken down, and that they might have true fellowship with each other in both carnal and spiritual things. If the gift were received in the spirit in which it was offered, they would have communion together in mutual gratitude and esteem, and in their common devotion to Jesus Christ, the source of every blessing. A gift, therefore, is a communion, because it is a service of the spirit, a manifestation of love in both giver and receiver, and a recognition of their unity in all things in Christ.

3. The same idea is brought out in two other passages where the word is used. In the Apostolic benediction in II Cor. 13:14 Paul prays that the "communion of the Holy Ghost," as well as the grace of Christ and the love of God, may be with the believers. The divisions in the Corinthian church had been the source of all their troubles. In both epistles Paul deals with them. As he here closes his letter they are uppermost in his mind, and he adds to his usual benediction "the love of God," that is, not love for God, but the love which God feels, and his desire is that they may love one another as God loves them. To this he adds "the communion of the Holy Ghost," that is the unbroken fellowship which the members of the church should have with the Holy Spirit. There can be no fellowship with the Holy Spirit where there is strife between themselves. Whatever separates you from a brother at the same time separates you from God. To have communion with the spirit, believers must be one in heart and soul. And the "communion of the Holy Spirit," for which he prays, will bind them together as members of Christ's mystical body, and lead them unitedly into fellowship with God.

In Phil. 2:1, 2 the Apostle is also pleading for unity. Evidently there had been some strife in the church, and he pleads not only for peace, but for real community of spirit. The basis of his plea is "the communion of the Spirit" in which all believers should jointly participate, and which is impossible if they be alienated from one another.

These passages shew the two ideas in the word "communion." First, there must be fellowship between the worshippers. Not only must they have the same experiences, convictions, emotions and aims, but there must be free interchange of thought and feeling regarding them, and the believers must be of one heart and soul. Next, the members thus united hold fellowship together with God. His Spirit possesses each and all; His thoughts and feelings move them; and they, in turn, express to Him their love and trust and adoration. Spirit with spirit meets and blends in the communion between the soul and God. Communion, in this sense, belongs to public worship rather than to private; it is held in the sanctuary, not the closet. The individual may have fellowship with God secretly; in fact, personal contact with God is a necessary preparation for public communion. But we receive through our union with one another blessings which we cannot receive in private worship. God's highest blessings are reserved for the church collectively, and cannot be attained to by isolated individuals.

We are now able to feel the force of the word "Communion" in the passage before us. "*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?*" As we have noted before, the blood of Christ brings both pardon and cleansing. Through it our guilt is cancelled, by it our hearts are purified. As we come together to the Lord's Table we re-affirm to each other and to the world by this solemn symbolical service our united dependence

on the blood of Christ for these things. And not only so, but in the rite, when it is observed in faith, we receive anew the benefits purchased for us by the shedding of the Saviour's blood. We have communion in the blood, because together we receive through the same channel all that the blood represents and imparts. We appropriate its blessing here as we can nowhere else; it is brought home to the heart with a vividness and force that no other means of grace can equal.

*"The bread which we break is it not a communion of the body of Christ?"* At the Lord's Table we all look to Christ as the only nutriment of the soul. And we not only regard and confess Him as such, but together we partake of the Bread of Life. The Lord's Supper is not only a symbol of blessing, but a channel for conveying blessing to the soul. We actually receive Christ both as our pardon and our support. Thus we touch spiritual life at its very fountain, and jointly participate in what is most sacred to our very being.

We may illustrate this experience from other sides of life. Take, for example, any game which people play together. All who engage in it enter into the spirit of rivalry, all are stimulated by the inspiration and delight it brings, and all are influenced by it according to the game's nature. Athletic sports cultivate in their devotees steadiness, self-control, alertness, and resourcefulness, in addition to bodily strength and skill. Those who throw themselves into games of chance, as in gambling and speculation,

become unsteadied, unreliable, and unfitted for the plodding, persistent effort that is necessary for production, which is the only basis for true success in life. In each of these cases, and in all others, when men enter into the spirit of the game, its spirit possesses them and becomes theirs.

A class for literary or musical study have fellowship with one another about the subject in hand. They enter into the writer's soul; they feel, think and aspire as he did. They do this together. They have the author's emotions and ideas in common. Each feels and understands what the others feel, and each moves the others to feel more pronouncedly as he himself does. The nature of the work they study enters into them, refining, strengthening and elevating their minds and souls, and making them like the soul that produced it. They cannot enter into its spirit and avoid this, and the more heartily they enter into it the more perfectly will it possess them.

The same principle governs our communion with the body and blood of Christ. Together we confess our sins, and find in Him forgiveness and purification. We rejoice in the same experiences in receiving this grace. Unitedly we feed on Christ as the Bread of Life. And as we enter into the spirit of the service, His spirit takes possession of us and becomes our spirit. His very nature enters into ours, nourishing and strengthening whatever is Christ-like, and adding graces all its own.

We cannot emphasize too strongly the social character of this service. It is through the influence of soul on soul as we together commune with Christ that its peculiar blessing is received. That is what communion implies. There is a spirit in such public communion with the Master and a grace conveyed through it that simply cannot be obtained in our private devotions. When a number of God's people meet together and their spirits unite in worship, we have, not a combination of the different spirits, but a new element composed of all, yet different from all. Some one has said: "Hydrogen and oxygen brought together in right proportions form water, but the water is neither the one nor the other, nor the sum

of the two, but that which results from the union of the one on the other—a new thing." So the spirit of a service like this is more than the sum of its parts. It is a new element, and as water does for us what neither oxygen nor hydrogen can, so this spirit of a meeting moves and benefits the souls of the individuals as none of the elements composing it is able to do. We all contribute to it, and in turn are influenced by it. Christ manifests Himself there in a power and richness impossible elsewhere. He can do so because of the new element produced by the united devotions of His people. As we partake together of the symbols of His body and blood, and our spirits blend in worship, we receive the benefits of His death for us in a vitalizing way peculiarly its own.

## II. COMMUNION WITH CHRIST MAKES US LIKE CHRIST.

*"Seeing that there is one bread, we the many are one body: for we all partake of that one bread." — I Cor. 10: 17.*

Unquestionably this, as given by Findlay, is the correct rendering. Or, as Heinrici paraphrases it, "One bread makes one body." The idea is that the spiritual bread we partake of determines the nature of the man partaking. If his soul food be demonic, he becomes demonic in disposition; if his spiritual nourishment be found at the Jewish altar, the peculiar Jewish type of character becomes his (verse 18). Similarly if he partake of what Christ's flesh and blood spiritually signify, Christ's nature enters into him. The nature of the one we hold communion with is through the service communicated to the worshipper.

This may be illustrated still more widely. The old Norse faith and rites of worship made its devotees warlike and cruel. The men became like the gods they worshipped. Those who accept Mohammedan teaching and enter into its spirit, become fanatical, fatalistic, warlike, believing in the sword as the best means of extending the prophet's authority. The people become in disposition what their religion is. The same tendency is clear within the Christian Church. Calvinistic doctrine, with its hard views of God's sovereignty, makes men stern both to themselves and others, devoted to duty, and confident of the ultimate triumph of their cause. The difference in temper between the soldiers of the Salvation

Army and members of the Anglican communion is made by the difference in the form and spirit of their worship, their views of God, and the particular truths which they emphasize. So with all sects. Their spiritual food determines their spiritual character.

Now, if at the Lord's table we enter into Christ's spirit and actually commune with Him personally in receiving the benefits of His death we shall become like him in nature, and more like Him daily. As Spitta maintains, the Supper means the spiritual assimilation of Christ. This is but another way of expressing what Christ teaches in John 6: 56: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." On the four 'ation elements of Christianity all believers agree. The points on which they differ are but trifles compared with the great truths and principles on which they are at one. And these truths and principles are all embodied in Christ. If we really assimilate Christ spiritually, we should all be alike in these respects. Christians should have not only the same name, but the same nature. As we are all conformed to His image, imbued with His Spirit, and nourished in united personal fellowship with Him, we should differ from all the rest of the world and become members of one body in Him.

This is still further illustrated by the balance of Paul's argument: "*Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they which eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? What shall I say then? That a thing*

*sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" I. Cor. 10: 18-22.*

The argument is to this effect: What the heathen sacrifice, they really sacrifice to demons. Now these Corinthian Christians who wanted to attend the idol feasts, could not hold communion both with the Lord and with demons. Why not? Because, in the communion worshippers jointly participate in the nature and spirit of the being communed with. Those who commune with demons enter into the demonic spirit; those who hold communion with Christ enter into His spirit and are possessed by it. Now, the nature of Christ and the nature of demons are mutually exclusive. They can no more exist together than fire and water can exist together in one vessel. To attempt to combine them will provoke the fierce jealousy of God. On this ground Paul argued against attending idol feasts. With deep reverence we may see in his argument the blessed meaning of the Communion Service to the believer. Through it we become partakers of the Divine Nature; Christ's spirit enters into us. The benefits of His sacrifice are received by us, and the nature of

our spiritual food determines the nature of our spiritual being.

The chief benefit of the Communion Service is, therefore, that it makes us Christlike. As the soul feeds on Christ our nature becomes like His. And when we become Christlike in nature our words and deeds will soon become like His. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Struggles with temptation in so far as temptation arises from our own desires for sin, and difficulties in the way of obedience and service will become lighter and eventually disappear when we are transformed into the image of God's Son. This is itself the solution of all our problems. And we receive this at the Lord's table if we really enter into communion with Christ and allow Him to work in us His perfect will.

## CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE

*John 6: 27-58*

Does this chapter expound the principles embodied in the Lord's Supper? Some maintain that it was intended by Christ to do so, while others deny that there is any connection between them. This much is clear, both treat of the same truth. Whether Christ intended this discourse to be His exposition of the Eucharist or not—and the writer does not think that He did—it is unquestionable that He here lays down in doctrine the identical truths that He afterwards set forth in symbol. In fact, the saying, "This is my body broken for you," might well be taken as the text of this sermon.

The address was occasioned by the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and the sensation it had caused among the people. By comparison and contrast Christ shewed that He alone could supply the spiritual food which their souls required. As the discussion proceeded, they cited the giving of the manna as a sign from God, which the Messiah should be able to repeat. The Jews had a tradition to this effect: "As the first Redeemer caused the manna to fall from Heaven, so should the second Redeemer cause the manna to fall." Christ might have pointed to His recent miracle as a fulfilment of

their expectation, but instead, He pointed out that it was not Moses but God who gave the manna, and that a spiritual food which would sustain life forever He was now providing for all the world.

### I. CHRIST'S PROVISION OF BREAD.

"Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, *even* God, hath sealed. They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them: This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What then dost thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? what workest thou? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world."—John 6: 27-33.

Here there are two contrasts. One is between the perishableness of earthly food and the enduring character of the bread of life. The other is between "work" and "give." The bread that perisheth is the product of hard labor; the bread that abides is a free gift. The Jews did not see this distinction in the statement of verse 27, and asked again about the work which God required. This led Christ to declare that the only work required is to believe, and again to emphasize in verse 32 that the true bread is a gift from God.

1. This shews that *our religion is primarily supply as distinct from demand*. It is gift, not requirement. It provides what we need instead of taking from us what we already have. Christ brings this truth out by the figure "bread." We all see the difference between the man who offers us a meal,

and the one who asks us to work. The latter taxes our strength; the former replenishes its sources. So Christ comes to all, offering nourishment which will build up our moral and spiritual character, and equip us for the struggle of life. And the provision is free to all; we do not need to work for it, but simply to accept what Christ supplies.

This was the truth underlying the great Pauline controversy between law and grace. As principles of salvation, they are contrasted in their modes of action. Law demands, grace supplies; law is a tax on our resources, grace replenishes these resources; law adds new burdens, grace provides strength to bear the burdens we have already; law says obey that you may live, grace says live that you may obey. They are contrasted in their spirit. Law is exacting, grace nourishing; law inflicts, grace heals; law seeks to compel men by external authority to a conformity which is contrary to their nature, grace changes the nature so that they love righteousness and follow it out of the desires of their own hearts. It is human nature to revolt against constraint, and the law in forbidding sin incites to greater sin; but when human nature is renewed by grace its own tendencies are all God-ward. Paul saw that if Christianity were made a tax and a demand first, it could never save men, because men were helpless under the law they had already, and would be in worse condition under a stricter and higher one. Therefore he kept up the controversy until the dis-

tinctive feature of Christ's religion was established as the faith of the church, namely, that God offers freely to men pardon, renewal, grace and help, and that only after these are accepted does He expect the obedience and service peculiar to Christianity.

It is scarcely necessary to add that this is the corner-stone of Reformation teaching. The doctrine of free salvation was what Luther contended for, and "justification by faith alone" is the foundation on which the church rests.

Nowhere is it more necessary to keep this in mind than at the Lord's Table. The average young believer "comes forward" with more dread than expectancy. He is thinking more of the heavier obligations he is taking upon himself than of the new grace he is about to receive; rather of the judgment which partaking unworthily involves than of the special blessing which humble and trustful partaking brings. It is true that discipleship involves obedience to Christ's commands, but Christ supplies in advance the grace necessary to live according to His will. His kingdom is "a kingdom of grace in order to be a kingdom of holiness." His table provides before it requires; it would not be a table, but a task otherwise.

*2. Spiritual strength is the product of spiritual nourishment.*

It is one thing to help a weak man out of a difficulty, it is another and better thing to build him up

with nourishing food so that he will be able to overcome the difficulty himself. This last is Christ's favorite method, and is the one outlined here. In his sermon on "Christ, the food of man," Phillips Brooks says: "The figure is clear. It means support or strength. That is the idea of food. Only food means a certain kind of strength. It is strength in a man, not strength without a man. It is strength incorporated, and not strength applied. You see the difference. If a wall is tottering upon the street, the men come with their timbers and wedge them in, and brace the bulging building back and hold it up. If a man is weak so that his legs tremble under him, you give him food, and the strength of the food enters into him and becomes his strength, and he stands firm." The one is strength applied; the other strength incorporated. Now, when we speak of Christ's strength, we generally understand by it the strength He applies. We are tempted and cannot resist the temptation, so we ask Christ to help us, and he does so. Instances of such deliverance, nothing short of miraculous, are frequent. But it is strength applied. Strength incorporated is when a man is so fully possessed with the spirit of Christ that he abhors the vice, and would never think of degrading himself by it. He stands by Christ's strength as really as the other, but it is Christ's strength wrought into the nerve and fibre of his character, and instead of being helpless before temptation he is strong to help others now exposed to it.

This does not mean that we shall ever become independent of Christ. The more we grow in grace, the greater is our need of unbroken fellowship with Him. But it does mean that the believer should rise above the temptations that were irresistible and difficulties that were insuperable before his conversion, or in the first stages of his Christian career. It is a mistake to think that reliance on Christ means that we are always to be crying to Him for help against the same evils. Old temptations should not appeal to us now; if they do, they should be immediately trampled under foot. The strong man tosses aside the obstacle that is immovable for a child. Christ will intervene to help us whenever we need Him, but in inviting us to His table He proposes so to nourish and develop our spiritual nature that we shall be strong against all evil, and for any service that may be required of us.

So that if we are weak and feel that life's burdens and temptations are too great for us, the blessings provided at the Lord's Table are what we need. It is true that there are other places where we can receive this divine strength. God's Word, prayer, public worship, etc., all impart it. But the Lord's Supper is the climax of the means of grace, and when in symbol we feast on Christ's broken body and shed blood, the spiritual benefits secured by His death are conveyed to our souls.

## II. CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE BREAD WHICH HE PROVIDES.

"They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Jesus said unto them I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—John 6: 34-35. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die."—John 6: 47-50.

This is a distinct advance on the first part of the discourse. There He promised to provide; here He offers Himself as the provision. Its pivotal truth is: "I am the bread of life"—with the emphasis on the pronoun.

Here we have the doctrine of the personal indwelling of Christ. In verse 56 He states it more emphatically: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him." The same truth is set in a still clearer light in John 14: 15-20, in connection with the promise of the Paraclete. First the promise is given that the Paraclete will be with the disciples forever, and then that He shall abide in them. To this verse 18 adds that through the Paraclete Christ Himself will come personally unto believers and abide in them (verse 20). In John 15: 1-8, life, fruitfulness and power in prayer are all made dependent on our abiding in Christ and His abiding in us. These are but different ways of stating the truth we are considering that feeding on the bread of life means receiving Christ personally into the secrets of our being.

"Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit  
can meet—

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and  
feet."

Paul states the truth thus in Gal. 2: 20: "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." We might almost call it a double personality. Side by side with his own self-consciousness there was the personality of Christ, and He was the dominant factor in Paul's inner life.

A young man once went to the Lord's Table in a time of great mental stress wondering what blessing he would receive. As he waited expectantly the significance of Ephes. 3: 17 dawned on his mind: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." He realized then that Christ as a personal presence would take up His abode in the soul, to whom we may speak and who will speak to us, whose love we may feel, and whose will may act on ours continually, restraining and constraining. Nothing can separate us from Him. No human being can be so near to us as He is, for in our hearts, at the very fount of life, He takes up His abode forever.

This explains how He can speak in verse 27 of the meat He gives as "abiding unto eternal life," and in verse 51 of Himself as "the living bread." Ordinary food supports life only by undergoing change and decay, but the food Christ offers remains in the one who partakes of it as a principle of power issuing in eternal life. It is because the bread is

Christ. He abides *in* us, as well as *with* us, alway. As the living bread He is able to communicate the life which he possesses. We are thus brought into vital union with Him who is the actual source of all life, and it is Christ's own life that we receive.

We can understand, too, what Christ meant when He said: "He that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (verse 35). They shall never feel an unsatisfied want. Everywhere and always they shall find in Him an abundant supply for every spiritual need. This truth is put still more clearly in John 4: 13,14, "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Samaritan woman was dependent on the well for her supply of water; if debarred from it she could not quench her thirst. In contrast with this Christ offers a spring of water in the heart from which one could never be separated, and which would be more than sufficient for every need. Have we not experienced this? When Christ enters the heart He never forsakes us. If we are weak, we find strength in Him; if we are sad, He can comfort; if we are perplexed He will be our guide. We do not need to travel to the temple, or retire to the closet, to cry to the heavens above, or moan to the earth beneath, for the spiritual refreshing and reviving we may require. He is in our hearts and can at once do for us all that we

need. A man may leave his home and die in the desert of thirst, not because his well has gone dry, but because he cannot get to it. But you might as well speak of separating an individual from his life or his nature as of separating him from Christ because He dwells in the secrets of the soul itself, and all His fulness is with Him, on which we may draw for every need.

How real, then, is the blessing which we receive at the Lord's Table! To the believer it does not mean that Christ enters his heart for the first time, because Christ was already there. But it does mean that we give Him a larger place, and look to Him to work within us His perfect will. We all know what a strength and inspiration a pure and devoted companion is. His presence banishes the very thought of evil. How much more must the actual indwelling of Christ nourish and develop everything in us that is good and spiritual! Not only do His example and influence move us Godward, but His power renews our nature and moulds us to His will. As at His table we feed on Him, we give Him opportunity to weave into the fibre of our nature His love, purity, joy and devotion, to obliterate all that is sinful and subdue all that would rebel, and to make us like Himself. Our aim should be, therefore, to come into the closest possible fellowship with Him at His Table, and to submit wholly to His will, so that when we say with Paul: "I live: and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me," we may also say: "That life which I now live in the flesh,

I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

### III. CHRIST BECOMES OUR BREAD THROUGH DEATH.

"I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove one with another, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him."—John 6: 51-56.

When Christ here said that He became the food of men, He meant that His flesh and blood were necessary to the life of the soul. Without partaking of it no man could have life in himself. As we read: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life," we are reminded of the words spoken at the institution of the supper under the shadow of the Cross: "This is my body which is for you." "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." In thus speaking separately of the elements of His bodily life given for the world, He foreshadows the violent death by which the world was to be saved. As the wheat must be ground and its own life destroyed that its substance may become available for the food of man, so Christ had to die in order to become the bread of life for perishing humanity.

Westcott draws attention to this fact, that the thought here is not of Christ's death as atonement, but as the support of life and means of its growth.

The object of Christ's sacrifice is to make men like Himself, to reproduce the divine nature in them.

The first step to this end is to call the guilt of the past. This Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice does. One of our leading thoughts at the Lord's Table is of gratitude and rejoicing that at the Cross the burden of sin rolled away. But that is only the first step. The next is to conform us to Christ's likeness. For this, as well as for the removal of guilt, the death of the Redeemer is the instrument. The love of God is the great motive and influence to make men God-like. And that love received its supreme manifestation at the Cross. Nothing short of the Cross could have moved men to yield their own wills, and give up their own ways, and allow God to perfect in them the divine plan.

In line with this idea Christ uses the figure "eating and drinking" to describe our action in appropriating the benefits of Christ's death. The writer above quoted says: "To 'eat' and to 'drink' is to take to one's self by a voluntary act that which is without, and then to assimilate it and make it part of one's self. It is, as it were, faith regarded in its converse action. Faith throws the believer upon and into its object; this spiritual eating and drinking brings the object into the believer."

One can readily see the difference between the faith that merely brings pardon, and that which assimilates Christ's nature and makes it our own. It is one thing to accept Christ's atonement, and another greatly in advance to adopt His spirit of sacrifice as our spirit, and the ruling principle of our lives. It is one thing to look to Him for mercy and

another to show His merciful disposition towards others (Matt. 18: 21-35); one thing to depend on His love, and a vastly different matter to become loving like Him; one thing to ask His help and a much better thing to seek the helpful spirit and support the weak. Many trust in Christ as their only hope of salvation who do not go forward to become like Him. As we sit at His table and feed on Him as the bread of life, our one desire ought to be to receive the elements of His nature into our souls. Just as the bread we eat is digested and becomes blood and nerve, muscle and bone, so our spiritual food, which is Christ, will become part of ourselves, His nature will become our nature, and His virtues will become the ruling elements of our inner life.

Let us not, therefore, stop with the atonement as we think of the Cross, nor let us be satisfied with pardon as we consider our own condition. When forgiven the work of grace is only begun. Our sins must be rooted up; our selfishness and self-will purged out in the fire of His love. There is a difference between pardon and cleansing. To be pardoned is to have the guilt of past sin cancelled; to be cleansed is to have the heart so purified that it won't desire sin any more. There is a difference between the regenerate and the full-grown believer. The regenerate may be only a babe in Christ; the mature believer has grown out of his spiritual infancy, developed his spiritual nature and cultivated his powers. He has become spiritual, while the babe in Christ, although

really Christ's child, may still be carnal (I. Cor. 3: 1-3). We need to go on to perfection (Heb. 6: 1-3).

"If thou couldst in vision see  
Thyself the man God meant—  
Thou never more wouldest be  
The man thou art content."

To become what Christ intended us to be, to realize in experience and character and service what God planned for us, ought to be the aim of every soul. And God's ideal for us can be reached only by feeding the soul on Christ, and letting His nature enter into us and His spirit possess us.

## THE NEW COVENANT

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood."—I Cor. 11:25.  
"This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins."—Matt. 26:28.

God's relations with men under the old dispensation were most frequently expressed in terms of a covenant. We have, therefore, in the Old Testament the covenants with Noah, with Abraham, with Israel at Mount Sinai, and with David. Nothing was more natural than that men trained in Jewish schools should express the relations between God and man in covenant terms, even when religion became more spiritual and the universality of God's grace was recognized.

There are certain truths set forth in the covenant with exceptional clearness.

God does enter into definite relationships with men. All the blessings He offers are conditional. If we ignore the conditions we cannot acquire them no matter how fervently we long for them; but when we fulfil the conditions He binds Himself to the full performance of his part.

God gives men, by outward signs and pledges, a claim upon Him. He thus gives us a standing before Him. He lifts us from the position of mere pardoned criminals and makes us citizens in His Kingdom, and invests us with the rights of citizenship. Instead of being regarded as beggars at His

door, or as repentant prodigals fit only for the servant's place, we are restored to the position of sons and are clothed with the symbols of sonship. The sacraments are the seals of God's covenant, His signature to its terms. With these pledges in our hands we can claim the fulfilment of every promise. These outward pledges do not make God readier to bless, but they do increase our faith, and give us a hold to which faith can cling.

### I. THE TERMS OF THE NEW COVENANT

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."—Jeremiah 31: 31-34.

When Christ, in instituting the Supper, spoke of the cup as the new covenant in His blood, and His blood of the covenant, He unquestionably had this passage in mind. He regarded this as the covenant which His blood was to seal, just as the old covenant was sealed with the blood of animal sacrifices, which were types of Christ's sacrifice of Himself. The writer to the Hebrews quotes the whole passage in the same connection, and then goes on to shew how Christ's blood puts it into effect and ratifies it.

The terms of the new covenant are here cited, and in considering them it will be well to reverse the

order in which they are given, as the most fundamental is here placed last.

*1. The foundation of the covenant is forgiveness.*

"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."—*Jerem. 31: 34.*

As Westcott says: "The covenant rests upon forgiveness on the part of God, not on performance on the part of man. Its foundation is grace, not works" (*John 1: 17*). The old covenant rested on obedience. Israel said: "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient" (*Exodus 24: 7*). Then the covenant was sealed with blood. But Israel disobeyed, and hence were never able to claim the fulfilment of the covenant as a right. They had violated its terms, and their only plea was God's mercy. The new covenant, however, rests on mercy. Pardon, not obedience, is its basis, and we are thus insured against similar failure. If we had to obey in order to inherit the privileges of the covenant, we should fall short as surely as did Israel. But its blessings are conditioned on Christ's grace, not on our merits. Our claim rests on His righteousness, not our own. We must accept forgiveness as freely as it is offered. When we do this God does the rest. There is no chance of earning salvation. Obedience is required, but it follows, instead of preceding, our admission to the riches of grace. The Jews were expected to obey in order to live; we are given life and grace and all things in order to obey. They could not but fail, because, as the writer to the Hebrews shews, the old covenant was essentially

defective in these respects. But our covenant has a sure foundation in the grace of God. As long, therefore, as we are sincere in surrender to and trust in Christ, we can claim all that the covenant guarantees. When we approach the Lord's Table it is with a profound sense of our unworthiness, but our confidence is immovable, because our privileges are secured to us by the mercy of God.

*2. Personal knowledge of God is the next of the covenant's terms.*

"They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and ev'ry man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."—Jerem. 31: 34.

The same promise is repeated with more emphasis and detail in the prophecy of the Pentecostal outpouring in Joel 2: 28-30. There old and young, slaves and free, are alike baptized with the Holy Spirit, with all the gifts and graces that this brings. All are to have equal opportunities of knowing God. The unlearned will be as capable of personal acquaintance with God as the scholar, because immediate contact with Him depends on the condition of the heart, not on the strength of the mind. In the old dispensation God revealed Himself particularly to priests and prophets; the class had privileges of access to His presence denied to the common people; but now all men may meet Him face to face. This promise is being amply fulfilled. The humblest believers often have the richest experiences of His grace, and the most intimate communion with Him. He walks with the lowly on the plains and in

the valleys as closely as with the great on the mountain tops of life. Men do not need to ask others to mediate between them and God, as Israel did with Moses when they were terrified by the thunders of Sinai (Exodus 20: 18-21). The veil hiding the Holy of Holies is rent in twain, and through Christ all have access personally to the mercy seat (Ephes. 2: 18 and 3: 12).

### *3. The New Covenant is inward.*

"I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it."—Jerem. 31: 33.

Instead of engraving the law on tables of stone, it is to be imprinted on their inner life. It is to become a part of their moral constitution. Its precepts will become their own principles, and they will do right because right doing is the natural tendency of a renewed character.

One animal keeps out of the gutter because he is fenced off from it; another shuns it because he detests filth. One man does not steal because the law prevents it, and will punish any breach through its fence of prohibitions; another avoids dishonor because his soul abhors it, and loves an honor that is clear as the sun. That is just the difference between the man who does right because the law forbids wrong, and the one who lives righteously because righteousness is his native element, and his heart delights in it. Christ gives us a clean heart, a renewed nature, which is adapted to a life of virtue as the eye is fitted for the sunlight. On such a heart

the law is written; its principles are the course in which his nature runs.

This is possible only with a *new covenant*. It was not possible for all the observances and regulations of the Jewish ritual to be written in the heart. These were arbitrary enactments, and their violations were artificial sins. Conscience, unaided by special revelation, discovered every one of the principles of the Decalogue, as may be seen in many heathen codes. Whenever men hear them they instinctively recognize them as binding. But the conscience unaided could never feel that the Jewish regulations about circumcision, clean and unclean meats, feasts and fasts, defilement and purification, were of permanent and inherent moral obligation. They had their place in the evolution of religion, but it was not an abiding one, nor was it grounded in the nature of things. Such rules could never be written in the heart. They had to be learned at the priest's mouth, and ignorance of them might involve serious consequences. So that the fact that God will accept obedience to the law written in the heart as a fulfilment of His requirements means that all these arbitrary enactments will pass away whenever the new covenant comes into effect, and that the great moral principles, innate in the human soul, will take their place as the guide of life. Only as the heart is changed, and the new spirit enlightened by the Divine Spirit, our conception of these principles will be heightened and enlarged, and the authority

behind them, and grace for obeying them, will be strengthened with the strength of God.

This part of the covenant is also being carried out in the fulness of the spirit. The glory of the church is her saints who rise far above the law, and acknowledge the obligations of love. As Paul says we are not under the law, but under grace, and grace calls forth a spirit of sacrifice and devotion in God's service that law could never impart.

## II. THE NEW COVENANT SEALED WITH BLOOD.

This is brought out in Hebrews 9: 11-22, by comparing the ratification of the old covenant with that of the new. The passage may also be regarded as an expansion and exposition of Christ's words, "the new covenant in my blood." His death in its relation to the new covenant is here spoken of in two ways—first, as a redemption or atonement on which the covenant rests, and next as the means of ratifying the covenant.

1. *The Covenant is based on Christ's blood*, that is, His atoning death made it possible. In the types of the Levitical law the shedding of blood for sin preceded and prepared for every approach of the people to God, and every manifestation of God's favor to them. Apart from such sacrifices for sin they dared not enter His presence. These symbols mean nothing unless they point forward to the Atonement as removing every obstacle from between man and God, and as essential to that end.

This redemption procures for us three things, and

in what it brings it puts the terms of the New Covenant into effect.

(a) It provides an Atonement for sin.

"But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered into the holiest place, having obtained eternal redemption."—Hebrews 9: 11-12. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission."—Hebrews 9: 22.

In instituting the Supper Christ said, according to Matthew, that the cup is "my blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins." Now the main feature of the new covenant as outlined by Jeremiah is, "I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more." This is possible only through the death of Christ. Apart from it we cannot enter the presence of God here or hereafter, except to our undoing. Guilt is not a light thing, as men are inclined to regard it in these days. It means exposure to the eternal wrath of God and to eternal death. Now remission means release from the penalty of the law, freedom from the burden of guilt on our conscience, acceptance into favor with God. It is therefore the foundation of every privilege and blessing to which we can ever be admitted in the kingdom of grace. We have seen that the new covenant rests on forgiveness, as the old was conditioned on obedience. Here we are taught that forgiveness rests on the atonement made for all by the death of Christ.

(b) Through Christ's death the sinner is cleansed.

"For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanliness of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who

through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"—Hebrews 9: 13-14.

Remission means the removal of guilt; cleansing means the purification of the nature. As one has said: "Remission means release, deliverance, not so much from special sins as from the bondage of which wrong-doing is a result. In this sense 'cleansing' is to a certain degree opposed to 'release.' The one marks the removal of the stain, the other the enabling for action."

How does the blood of Christ cleanse? How does Christ's death, in addition to bearing the penalty due for sin, wash out the impurity which sin has left on the sinner's soul?

It is asserted that the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience. When we speak of a man having an evil conscience, we may mean one of two things. We may mean that his conscience goads him to do what is wrong, and therefore approves and insists on wrong. In that case the conscience itself is wrong. It calls evil good. Paul's conscience drove him to persecute the church. He says: "I verily thought with myself that I *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26: 9). The conscience of the Hindoo mother makes her throw her child into the Ganges. Many deeds of revolting inhumanity have been required by the darkened and distorted consciences of the heathen. The consciences of devout Jews of God's own day demanded endless ceremonial observances as the condition of salvation. Pathetic stories are told of

earnest souls in Roman Catholic and heathen countries longing for salvation, and seeking to satisfy that longing by self-torture and sacrifice, and unremitting diligence in the duties which their religion specified. This writer calls them "dead works," and dead works can never produce spiritual life. And numbers of such devotees, whose lives had been made a burden by their penances and pilgrimages to no profit, have rested in perfect peace whenever they grasped the truth of Christ's death as a sufficient atonement. Their consciences were cleansed. The wrong conscience was set right. It no longer required what was useless or sinful. This writer feels that men need to repent from dead works as well as from sin (Heb. 6: 1), and that the conscience must be cleansed from them as well as the heart from corruption. And the conscience thus purged will move men to the services of righteousness and love which a living God requires.

Next, we may mean by an evil conscience that it torments the sinner for his evil deeds. In this case, the conscience itself is right, but it is burdened with the wrongs the man has done. The agonies of remorse through which some men go for hidden sin are indescribable. Some of the greatest tragedies in history and literature are caused by the tortures of a bad conscience. Shakespeare's Macbeth and Hamlet are cases in point. Now, the blood of Christ cleanses this, too. In the first place, the Gospel requires repentance, confession and restitution as the condition of pardon. The evil must be

first abandoned and then confessed. Then the wrong done must be righted as far as our power can do it. Sins against God must be confessed to God. Evil done to men must be made right with men. We get right with God by doing right to men. The man of unclean hands, in the scriptural sense, is the one who has not sought to rectify the injuries he has done to others. There can be no pardon nor peace until this is done. If it is done sincerely it is in itself a relief to conscience. But when our best is done, much remains that is beyond our power to remedy. Then, when to this repentance we add trust in Christ, He becomes responsible for all our sin. He blots it out as a black cloud. The conscience realizes that the sin is made right with God and ceases its upbraiding. Christ's death is recognized as a sufficient atonement for our sin. God assures us of His favor, and the evil conscience is cleansed.

A conscience thus purified is wonderfully sensitive to moral distinctions. It is readier than ever to detect and condemn the slightest wrong, and to discern and approve the right.

The heart is cleansed by Christ's blood, as well as the conscience. Often the old longing for sin remains even after our guilt is pardoned. Now, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and the unclean heart should be purged. How does the blood of Christ cleanse the heart? It has been said in answer: "It is the power of a pure life which purifies." When men are pardoned, and

realize that the death of Christ was necessary to deliver them from the consequences of their sin, they cannot but hate the sins that nailed Him to the tree. Then by the faith that accepts Christ, we are brought into vital union with Him, and His presence within us inspires us with love for what is pure and true, and with a corresponding hatred of evil.

Another of the terms of the New Covenant is here fulfilled, viz.: that which promised that God's laws should be engraven on His people's hearts. When the heart is cleansed from sin, and the conscience purged unto good works, the soul desires to do God's will and instinctively recognizes it in all the circumstances of life.

(c) Next, through the atonement, Christ becomes the Mediator of the New Covenant.

"For this cause He is the mediator of a new covenant."—Hebrews 9: 15.

Under this covenant believers are promised immediate access to God. "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31: 34). Through Christ this is realized. Christ is thus both priest and victim, offering to God the sacrifice of Himself. Under the Old Covenant the priest stood between the people and God. Into the symbolical Holy of Holies, which represented the immediate presence of Jehovah, only the High Priest could enter, only once a year, and only with blood. But Christ through his own blood has entered into the great Holy Place once for all, and through Him we draw nigh to God. "Having

therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil that is to say, His flesh; and having a great priest over the House of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water" (Heb. 10: 19-22).

These truths shew us that Christ's death is the foundation of the New Covenant, and the source of every blessing it brings to the Church.

*2. The New Covenant is ratified or sealed by the blood of Christ.* His death makes the covenant immutable.

"And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for doth it ever avail while he that made it liveth?"—Hebrews 9: 15-17.

Here the death of the testator is shown to be necessary to the validity of the testament. In ancient covenants between man and man sacrifices were resorted to as the means of confirming the compact reached. Their idea was that a man was able to change any such agreement as long as he had life. To make it absolutely unchangeable death had to intervene. Then what was confirmed in life, the man could not alter after death. So in order to bind each other to the terms agreed upon, they killed the sacrifice, thus representing that they both died in symbol as far as this covenant was concerned, and that they could no more change it than if they

were dead. The form observed was this: The animal was killed and divided. The corresponding parts were placed over against each other, and the men passed between the parts of the divided sacrifice. They thus went through death in symbol, leaving behind their freedom to change the compact. This was the manner in which God made the covenant with Abraham as described in Gen. 15. The smoking furnace and burning lamp, signifying God's presence, passed between the divided parts, and God thus sealed forever the covenant with Abraham His friend.

Now through the death of Christ, God confirmed His covenant with us. This is not a symbolical but an actual death by which it is made sure. God thus pledges Himself invocably to our salvation in terms which man can understand. The covenant thus closed for us, and all who die with Christ in sin are guaranteed its benefits. There is no possibility of change. In this manner we, who are so prone to distrust God's willingness to save, are shewn that He could not change the covenant if He would. Those who experience His grace know that He would not if he could. "By two immutable landmarks is impossible for God to lie, wherefore a strong encouragement who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that within the veil" (Heb. 6: 18-19).

Then by partaking of the symbols of Christ's

shed blood we accept the covenant's terms and pledge our fidelity to them. "Wherefore even the first *covenant* hath not been dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward" (Heb. 9: 18-20).

Here the writer has in mind the account in Exodus 24, of the sealing of the Old Covenant. After the law was read and written, the young men, who represented the life and strength of the nation, offered the sacrifices. Moses took half of the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. This typified the atonement made for sin, to which we have already referred. The other half was reserved until the law was read a second time to the people, and by them accepted. When they heard it they said: "All that the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient." Then, as sealing that compact, and pledging them forever to its terms Moses sprinkled the other half of the blood on the people, saying: "Behold the blood of the covenant which God hath made with you concerning all these words."

Christ said: "This is the new covenant in My blood." What does the drinking of the cup mean? It is a pledge of loyalty to the covenant.

the covenant does not depend on obedience; obedience depends on the covenant. Under the law they had to obey in order to be entitled to the blessings of the covenant; under grace we enter the covenant that we may be enabled to obey. The New Covenant rests on forgiveness. It is immutable because it depends on Christ's merits and grace, instead of on our fidelity. But by partaking of the symbols of His blood we accept the pardon His blood bought, and commit ourselves forever to it. We shew forth our death with him to sin, as well as His death for sin. We pledge ourselves to use His grace for lives of holiness and service. We surrender to Him beyond the possibility of retracting. We reaffirm our unity with Him—a unity so complete that our souls are nourished by His very life.

## QUALIFICATIONS FOR PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

"But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's Supper; for in your eating each one taketh before *other* his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, He brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment."—I Cor. 11: 17-34.

In speaking of these qualifications there are two extremes into which we are in danger of running. One is that of making the way too hard, and so frightening the needy from the table where their needs can be supplied; the other is that of making the way too easy and thereby encouraging the unfit to attend to their own hurt. Both mistakes are serious. The efficacy of the rite is the measure of the danger of its abuse. The greater the benefit

it can confer on the worthy, the greater the injury it will inflict on the unworthy. If neglected, the loss is irreparable; if abused, the soul is exposed to the hardening influence of perverting the Church's most sacred rite and to the judgments of God for presumptuous sin. It is, therefore, of prime importance to know the scriptural teaching concerning the qualifications and disqualifications for observing the Lord's Supper.

### I. WHAT DOES PAUL MEAN BY "EATING AND DRINKING UNWORTHILY?"

We must interpret the phrase by the conditions which the passage was written to meet. In Corinth the love-feast was a social feast which preceded the sacrament, and was intended to prepare for it. It had its origin in the social gatherings of the Jerusalem churches, which were probably held in private houses. As the institution of the Lord's Supper followed immediately after the Paschal meal, this mode of observance was supposed to be Christ's own way of celebration. At the time when Christianity was established in Corinth, there were many guilds or friendly societies among the people there, whose membership was drawn from both rich and poor. One of the features of their gatherings was the social feast where all ate together. Provision for this was made from a common fund. So when the Corinthians entered the Christian church, they were prepared to welcome this feature of its worship. But instead of the supplies being purchased out of a

common fund, each member brought his contribution in kind. Out of this practice the abuses arose, when their sense of brotherhood was dulled, and divisions appeared among them. When they entered the assembly room, bringing their own provisions, they sat down at once, each to consume his own supply, like private diners in a restaurant. The rich brought superabundance, and gloried in the display, while they surfeited themselves with it: the poor could bring only a little, and that of the worst quality, and they were ashamed of its meanness, and their hunger was unsatisfied. The result would have disgraced a heathen guild, and how much more was it a shame to the House of God! The Corinthian church had already been rent with internal dissensions, but "of all schisms this was the most shocking—hunger and intoxication side by side at what was supposed to be the table of the Lord!" The rich vaunted themselves over the poor, the poor were embittered against the rich. Besides, the very spirit of such a feast was in the last degree carnal, and its atmosphere utterly unchristian. Paul shewed that it was no preparation for such a sacred service as the Lord's Supper; it rather unfitted them for it at every point. There could be no communion either with one another or with Christ, when such a spirit prevailed. Then when they ate ravenously, as famished men intent only on their food, they were utterly unprepared to discern the Lord's body in the sacred symbols. So Paul advises, when hungry take your meals at home. And when you come

together for the sacramental service, wait for one another, that you may unitedly hold communion with the Lord.

This state of affairs is what Paul described as "eating and drinking unworthily." Can we wonder that he called it "eating and drinking judgment to one's self." Now, Paul's exposure of this abuse is so thorough that a similar condition is impossible in the modern church. But the same principles may appear in different guises, and it is well to consider what they are.

1. *Splits in the church* unfit her members for partaking. This was the origin of all the trouble in the Corinthian church. Chapters 1:19 and 8:1-7 shew that intellectual differences divided them. Chapters 1:12 and 3:3, 4 prove that a partisan spirit stirred up dissensions among them. In this passage we see that the rich and poor were cleft asunder by the differences in their worldly estate, and one was proud and the other envious. And there could be no communion with Christ without union among the communicants.

Schisms in the church of to-day may start from various causes. Divergences in doctrinal beliefs may bring them about. So also may social distinctions, personal disputes, race divisions or disagreements on questions of policy. The point to be noted particularly is that it is not the difference in itself that causes the fatal split, but the personal animosities that they breed between the members. I may dissent from my fellow-member's doctrinal

views; the probability is that if we think independently we shall arrive at different conclusions on many points. But that need not prevent us from sitting together at the Lord's Table in mutual love and esteem, unless we are foolish enough to let the divergence in our views lead to such mutual prejudice and enmity that we can trust and co-operate with each other in nothing. To partake of the Lord's Supper in such a spirit is surely to "eat and drink unworthily."

Again, there must always be different social classes in the community. The differences in our circumstances, tastes and pursuits make this inevitable, and it is both natural and right that people who have most in common should associate most freely together. But the mischief comes in when we let these differences produce envy and hatred on the one side, and an exclusive caste spirit on the other, both of which refuse to recognize those who are not in our social set as brethren in Christ. Paul teaches that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 28, Col. 3: 11). This unity finds outward realization at the Lord's Table as it does nowhere else (I Cor. 10: 17), and to allow anything to interfere with it is to frustrate one of the main objects of its institution.

Then as long as men and women are human, personal disagreements will arise. But the most serious dispute can be settled by a conciliatory spirit on both

sides. When such disputes issue in bitterness and an unforgiving spirit, they shut Christ's love out of our hearts and make communion with one another and with Christ impossible. No one should approach the Lord's Table with an injury rankling in his breast. To forgive as we have been forgiven is absolutely essential as a preparation for the communion service (Matt. 5: 23, 24). To partake in an unforgiving spirit of the symbols of the blood shed for the forgiveness of sins is surely to profane the sacred rite, and to bring upon ourselves the judgment of God.

2. *Unseemly behavior at the Lord's Table* is here condemned. As Evans puts it: "The word *unworthily*, as the general context (vv. 19-21) clearly shews, points to irreverence of manner, which of itself argues unmeetness of spirit. . . . Formal unseemliness in eating or drinking implies moral unworthiness in the eater and drinker." Or as Plummer says: "This external irreverence is proof of internal contempt." If men realized what partaking of the sacred symbols meant, they could not treat them as they often do. Outward levity at the Lord's Table is rarely, if ever, seen now. Yet how often do men approach it with light and worldly thoughts, and regard its observance as a matter of no great consequence. It is to be feared that serious preparation for the observance of the rite is not as general as it ought to be. We may never even laugh nor be guilty of a flippant word at the Lord's Table, but if our state of mind and heart is such that

conduct of this sort would naturally express it if we dared, we are unfit for so sacred a privilege. Thus to partake is to dishonor the symbols of the Saviour's body and blood. And, as another writer puts it, "to outrage the emblem is to outrage the original—as if one should mock at the Queen's picture or his country's flag."

3. *Failure to discern the Lord's body while partaking of its symbols* is another cause of judgment (verse 29). To "discern the Lord's body" here means to discriminate between the symbol and the reality behind it, and to appropriate the spiritual reality through partaking of the symbol. Men fail to do this in two opposite ways. The Roman Catholic confuses the symbol and the reality. In response to priest's word the emblems become no longer emblems but the real body and blood of Christ. A supernatural virtue is thus attributed to the elements themselves. This is the danger of all symbolical worship. The educated Hindoo maintains that he does not worship the idol, but the spiritual being whom the idol represents. The ignorant multitude, however, does bow down to the gods of wood and stone. The intelligent Roman Catholic may discern the spiritual verities back of the signs—although it is difficult to see how even he can regard the actual body and blood of Christ as representing anything but itself—but the unthinking people do adore the "wafer god." And wherever devotion centres in anything external the act of worship loses its moral and spiritual qualities. Those who partake may

have superstitious reverence and fear, but they are not built up in grace nor increased in force of character. It is to be feared that many Protestants imagine that there is some sort of magical virtue in the rite itself apart from the faith of the receiver. Thus to partake is always hurtful to the higher nature.

The other way of failing to discern the Lord's body is to see nothing in the elements but bread and wine, to see no spiritual reality behind the symbols. This was the Corinthian error. They just ate as at a common meal. And for anyone to eat bread and drink wine in the way of an ordinance with a little seeming devotion is to fall short of the requirements in precisely the same way. The sacrament means this—that as the bread and wine eaten and digested sustain the body, so Christ's flesh and blood, received and assimilated by faith, nourish the spiritual life. Not only does the Lord's Supper symbolize that, but at His table we actually receive the benefits of Christ's death, if we partake believably; that is, they are thereby conveyed to us. Now, does the sacred rite mean this to us? Is there for us any spiritual element beneath the symbols, and conveyed through them to the soul? To recognize this spiritual food in the symbol and to receive it is to discern the Lord's body, and to partake acceptably in His sight. To fail to do so is to rob the sign of its meaning, and to degrade to an empty ceremonial what God has sanctified and blessed to the nourishment of the soul.

This is the meaning of the words of institution here. In them Paul shews what the sacrament means. It is as if he said: Here is what the Lord's Supper signifies and conveys (verses 23-26). If it does not mean this to your mind and bring this blessing to your soul you must be observing the outward form with a heart sealed against its spiritual efficacy. Therefore, neither do you enter into the spirit of the rite, nor does its peculiar grace find entrance to your life.

The whole argument rests on this: These spiritual realities are present only to faith. If anyone should partake who does not believe, the symbols have no meaning and bring no blessing to his soul. There is nothing present to his spirit corresponding to what the bread is to his bodily organs. The Roman Catholic holds that the wafer and wine are transmuted into the actual body and blood of Christ. Consequently the rankest infidel receives the Saviour's flesh and blood as really as the most fervent believer. At the first Communion table Judas received the same thing as Peter. Protestants recognize that the substance of the bread and wine are not changed, and that the spiritual realities are present only to faith. At the institution of the rite Peter received the real benefit of the sacrifice about to be offered, while Judas received only its sign. And the sign meant nothing spiritually to him. As St. Augustine put it: "The Apostles ate the bread, the Lord, but Judas ate only the bread of the Lord." Or as he

expressed it again: "The sacrament is one thing, the virtue of the sacrament another."

Of what then is he guilty who partakes unworthily? If, as Roman Catholics hold, he received sacramental grace, we could understand that as food eaten and not digested harms the body, so this grace received but not assimilated hurts the soul. But when he does not receive the spiritual element, where do the injury and guilt lie?

(a) He is guilty of profaning a sacred ordinance. He observes the form without entering into the spirit and without caring to understand what it means to God, and was intended to mean to man. The symbols which should be the signs and channels of the richest grace that God can impart to the soul, he debases to mean nothing to himself, and worse than nothing to those whose view of the service is influenced by his life.

(b) He pretends to do what he does not do. By word and action, before God and God's people, he professes to receive Christ for his sins' atonement and his soul's support, and he does not do it. His observance of the sacrament is, therefore, an acted lie—acted in God's presence and with God's blessing invoked upon it. There is nothing in his life corresponding to his solemn sacramental declaration.

(c) He enters into a covenant with God, observing the forms God has ordained, and sealing it in the symbols of the Saviour's blood. He does not keep it, and he never meant to keep it.

It is true that some do this ignorantly. They did not understand the deep significance of the sacred rite. They will not be held as guilty as those who sinned in the knowledge of what it meant. But when men thus deliberately mock God, surely their guilt is great.

## II. WHAT IS THE JUDGMENT WHICH PARTAKING UNWORTHILY INVOLVES?

The mistaken translation in the authorized version of verse 29—"eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," has frightened many from the Lord's Table who should have been there. It really means "judgment unto himself." There are two words in this passage signifying God's judgment against sin. One means any kind of a sentence, or a sentence to anything. That is the word used here, and also in the first clause of verse 32: "When we are *judged* we are chastened of the Lord."

The other word means a sentence to damnation. This is the word used in the last clause of verse 32, "That we may not be *condemned* with the world." So far, therefore, from unworthy eating and drinking such as the Corinthians did, bringing a sentence of damnation, this lesser judgment was inflicted in order that the greater might be averted. As verse 32 says: "When we are *judged* (the same judgment as verse 29) we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned (or damned) with the world." He that partakes unworthily, therefore, exposes himself to a sentence unto chastisement. Its aim is to

save the sinner from his peril, not to punish him eternally for his sin.

That chastisement may be very severe. "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep" (verse 30). Many among the Corinthians suffered serious physical maladies which God sent to chasten them, and some had been removed by death to save them from the fate that threatened them through these abuses. For the elect's sake the days were shortened (Matt. 24: 22). Similar abuses may bring similar applications from the hand of God now. But when the blow falls the salvation, not the damnation, of the erring one is His object.

Notice here the great mercy of God. To eat and drink, even in the unworthy manner described, is not the unpardonable sin. It is a serious transgression and is sure to bring chastisement, but God bears with us. In view of its danger and His mercy, how careful we should be to prepare ourselves that when we come to His table we may be clothed in His righteousness.

As Waterland has said: "The danger of misperforming any religious duty is an argument for fear and caution, but no excuse for neglect; God insists upon the doing it, and the doing it well, also . . . . Therefore in the case of the Holy Communion it is to very little purpose to plead the strictness of the self-examination, or preparation by way of excuse, either for a total, or for a frequent, or for a long neglect of it. A man may say that he comes not to

the table because he is not prepared, and so far he assigns a good reason; but if he should be further asked why he is not prepared when he may, then he can only make some trifling, insufficient excuse, or remain speechless."

### III. WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR PARTAKING WORTHILY?

1. *Discipleship.* It was instituted by Christ for His disciples. None but believers partook in the early days. Only those who are saved by His grace and ready to devote themselves to His service can enter into the spirit of such a service and fulfil the terms of the New Covenant. The Church's aim is a regenerate membership. The one thing of which we need to be sure is that we have accepted Christ as our Saviour, and surrendered our lives to His will.

2. *Self-examination* is another condition we must fulfil. It means testing one's self as metals are tested by fire, to determine our state and by the same process to remove the dross. If we find any wilful sin in our lives, we come at our peril until it is removed. But if we believe that we are genuine, not worthy in ourselves, but really trusting in Christ, then we may eat of that bread and drink of that cup. To do this conscientiously and with the help of God, averts the danger of unworthy partaking. As Paul says in verse 31: "If we discerned ourselves we should not be judged." Spiritual insight is needed in the communicant for two things, first to discern the

Lord's body, and second, to discern his own spiritual condition. God does not require perfection, but He does ask for a real forsaking of sin and dependence upon His Son. To partake in this spirit means eating and drinking salvation to ourselves.

It is our own spiritual condition, and the attitude of the soul toward God that determines the effect of Holy Communion upon us. It acts on the same principle as any other means of grace. No spiritual exercise can be ought but hurtful while we are resolved to remain in sin, or not resolved to abandon it. No religious observance can bring anything but condemnation while the soul is at enmity with God. Many regret their sins and long for future salvation, but are not ready to give up those sins with all that such action involves. They use different means of grace, hoping to benefit their souls while they remain in sin. It is a vain hope. The heart is hardened by contact with sacred things when we resist their pressure toward holiness. The Lord's Supper acts on that law only as the highest means of grace and richest source of blessing; the results of its abuse are more serious than the others.

Need is invited; impenitence excluded. Humility fits us for a blessing; hypocrisy exposes to a curse. The faults and weaknesses which you deplore may be needs which Christ wants to supply and blemishes which only He can remove. If you really want to be rid of these defects, and if you believe that Christ is able to free you from them, then come to His table. If you intend to hold on to them, then refrain. But

one says, I hate my sin and yet love it. I long to be spiritual, yet hanker after the carnal. Which desire predominates in your life? Which do you act upon? It is the one which your will enthrones and serves which is the real lord of your life. You may desire sin in your members and often fall? Is your sin like Judas' or Peter's? Was it arranged for deliberately, and when committed regretted but not repented? Or was it unpremeditated, and when done immediately confessed? If the former, you are unfit to come. If the latter the Lord's Table is the place of all in the universe where you ought to be.

## EXCUSES

"A certain man made a great supper, and he bade many; and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say, to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse."—Luke 14: 16-18.

Man's ingratitude appears here in sharp contrast with God's goodness. God provides and invites, and men ungratefully excuse themselves from attending. They appreciate neither the provision nor the Provider. Scant courtesy is shown to the Master and His messengers. What they urge against accepting His invitation are excuses, not reasons: *i.e.*, there are no obstacles which make their attendance impossible, but only statements which show in a roundabout way that they do not want to come. Their pre-occupation with other things, and their lack of regard for Christ and His grace stand out prominently in the narrative.

We meet this spirit more frequently in connection with the Lord's Supper than in anything else. Although this parable does not refer directly to that feast, yet the principles governing God's provision and man's attitude toward it are the same there as elsewhere. And the lessons brought out in the parable throw much light on the love on God's part that led to the foundation of our communion feast, and on the indifference on man's part with which His offer is met.

The parable pre-supposes a double invitation, a custom then common in the East. The first was sent when the feast was planned, the second when it was ready, and prompt attendance was expected. Men accepted the first and rejected the second. So it is with the Gospel. The announcement of God's provision of salvation men welcome, and some day they hope to share its benefits, but when the definite call comes requiring immediate action they decline. Our purpose now is to examine the excuses they offer for their refusal.

1. *Some earthly concern interferes.* In the parable before us, pre-occupation with worldly pursuits and pleasures forbade acceptance of the invitation. Often in the life of to-day the affairs of time come between the soul and its Saviour. Sometimes, as in this case, they prevent men from hearkening to the Saviour's call. Sometimes, as with the rich young ruler, Christ demands the abandonment of earthly goods as the condition of eternal life. Why is this? Does not God allow His children pleasure? Are not our worldly occupations God's will for us? Did he not call us to them, and is not the life-work of many of His servants done through their daily duty? All this may be admitted. But if the things to which your life is given be in their nature inconsistent with Christ's indwelling, they must be given up. If they claim the first place in your life they must be subordinated or sacrificed. If they cannot be subordinated, they must be sacrificed. The gospel is imperious in its demands. Christ must have full possession of

your soul. God must be God in your life, and on no other terms will He enter it.

(a) If, therefore, it be a sin which comes between you and Christ, it must be surrendered. Christ can save the blackest sinner *from* his sin; He cannot save the whitest sinner *in* his sin. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

(b) If it be a form of pleasure which is hindering your acceptance of Christ's invitation, the attitude of your own conscience toward it will probably voice Christ's decision regarding it. Of course, you will need to be sincere with yourself. People often affirm that their conscience approves a certain thing, when it is their own inclination that they are following. Their unrest on the subject shows a troubled conscience. On the other hand, sincere young persons often become morbid in their suspicion of everything that gives pleasure. This extreme is as dangerous to spiritual health and vigor as the other. They should be able to "discern the things which differ," and recognize their moral qualities so clearly that they can see and approve the better, and reject the worse.

If, then, your conscience condemns anything, for you it is wrong, no matter what it may be for others. It should be promptly cut out of your life. Surely it would be the blindest infatuation to let a mere amusement blight your prospects for eternity, and lead you to reject the Son of God. How terribly one's sense of the proportion of things must be warped to permit of such a choice!

Perhaps your decisions may be that your pastimes are right. Then do not let them keep you away from Christ. You can serve Him by sanctifying a pleasure which He allows you. The work of the Y.M.C.A. in purifying athletics and making them an avenue through which to reach the soul shows the possibilities along this line. Study all these matters out for yourself in the light of God's Word, and what you conclude is right do fearlessly. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." For "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

(c) Or it may be your business that prevents your acceptance of the invitation. Now, if it be wrong in itself, or hurtful to the soul, it must go. Men give up occupations that injure their bodily health, no matter how profitable they may be. And what is done to save a life that is only temporary, is not too much to give for the salvation of one that is eternal.

It is not often, however, that men are required to give up an earthly occupation for Christ. In the majority of cases God has called us to our place in life, and we are convinced that it is our duty to stay there. Such a calling should be a means of grace. But many who feel this profoundly urge that they are too busy to think sufficiently about these things. They have not time to prepare for so solemn a service as the Lord's Supper.

In answer to this it should be enough to say that God does not require impossibilities. He knows how busy we are, for He has assigned our duties.

But, if these duties are done in a Christian spirit they will prepare us for the table of the Lord. Exercise cultivates appetite—not only the desire for food but the need of it. And faithful work in the world, done in Christ's name and spirit, will make us hunger for the spiritual food that Christ alone can supply. Anyone who acts according to Paul's principle: "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men," will find his labor the best possible preparation for the Lord's Supper.

We need to come to the Lord's Table that we may receive strength to do our work well. It is a wise old saying: "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." If we were too hurried to eat, our strength would soon fail, and the work we were so anxious to push forward would be indefinitely delayed. Strength of character is as dependent upon nourishment as strength of body. We simply cannot overcome life's temptations and difficulties without regular spiritual nourishment. From worship, Bible study, etc., we gain the power to be "workmen that need not to be ashamed." Now all the specific preparation that is needed for the Lord's Table our regular periods of worship will give us. We need them for life's duties anyway. And more than anywhere else, at the Lord's Table we receive the grace and strength to fit us for the most efficient work. So far from life's hurry and worry being a reason why we should stay away from the Lord's Table, they are the strongest possible reason why we should come. The greater our burden, the greater our need, and therefore the

stronger the obligation to come to the only source of supply.

2. *A sense of personal unworthiness* often keeps men from the table of the Lord. "I am not good enough," is the excuse most frequently heard.

If this means that you have not decided for Christ you ought not to come until you do. But why not accept Him now? "If you tarry till you're better you will never come at all."

The only way to become "good enough" is to take Christ as your Saviour and Sanctifier. Those who do so are provided with the "wedding garment" of His righteousness, and only those who wear it are admitted to the feast. The best of men who come without it will be cast into the outer darkness; the worst of men, thus forgiven and clothed, are fitted for the presence of the King of Kings.

There are some, however, who have trusted Christ as a Saviour, but who fear their inability to meet the obligations which the sacrament entails. All such should remember what the feast signifies. It does not mean primarily responsibility, but strength to bear responsibility. As Dr. Bruce has put it: "Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of grace in order to be a kingdom of holiness." It is not enough to say: Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of holiness, and none but the holy can enter it. This is true, but it is only a half-truth, and is as dangerous as such half-truths generally are. Christ provides in advance the means to make us holy before He requires us to become holy. St. Augustine used to pray: "Grant

what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." Always before the requirement comes the grace to meet it. It is true that the Christian has obligations which the ungodly have not. But it is infinitely easier to live the Christian life with Christ's help, than to live an ordinary moral life without it. The law demands righteousness, and the man who attempts to live morally by the law fails as Paul once did (Romans 7). Christ requires a life of holiness and devoted service in addition to the righteousness of the law, and those who attempt it by grace, find it one of joy and victory (Romans 8). And of the means that bring this grace the Lord's Supper is the richest. Do not look at the responsibility without first considering the grace provided to bear it. No man could live up to these requirements without receiving grace in advance. But by the grace there given the service of Christ is a delight.

3. Others are kept from the Lord's Table *by the unworthiness of those already there*. They point to the numerous inconsistencies of church-members as their excuse. The argument implied, although not often expressed, is that if Christianity can do so little for these people they themselves do not need it.

Do you really mean that? You cannot but recognize in your heart of hearts that it is wherein these people are false to Christianity that they fail. If they would fulfil sincerely the conditions, Christ would make them all that they ought to be. Instead of their inconsistency proving that there is no genuine

religion, it rather confirms the validity of the Church's claims. The very existence of an imitation is evidence of the worth of the genuine article. Men do not copy what is worthless. "Hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue." These people would not pretend to be Christians if they did not know that vital Christianity is a power in the world, and that to be recognized as a Christian brings honor and influence among men.

It may be granted at once that this may be a valid argument against uniting with a particular congregation. If any Church should get into the hands of unworthy leaders, one would not care to identify himself with them. There is a great society whose constitution and general membership are all that can be desired. But in one place its lodge was run by the roughest characters in the neighborhood. No man of honor wanted to associate himself with them, even though he might believe firmly in the general principles of the order. But that would not justify him in condemning the whole organization on the ground of the sins of one lodge. So it is with the Church. There may be individual congregations where the leaders are unworthy. But they are few and far between, and are not sufficient to turn one against the whole Church. The man who feels scandalized by their sin should immediately find a worthy congregation and cast in his lot with it, because the best people in almost every community are in the Church. There you find men who through all their lives have sacrificed and struggled for

righteousness and truth. Their lives are unblemished, their honor without a stain, their labors have blessed man and glorified God. Surely they are more than worthy to associate with the best of us. It is a great mistake to overlook the virtues of these saints of God while fixing our attention on the faults of a few, and to allow the blemishes in the Church's body to blind us to all that grace has done in the noblest characters in the land.

The truth is that this argument shows a wrong spirit. The man who urges it does not realize his own sinfulness and need of a Saviour. Why is it that the best of saints have always been ready to call themselves the chief of sinners? Because every man whose eyes grace has opened, can see greater possibilities of evil in his own nature than he can find in his fellow-men. A sense of one's own weakness gives great charity for others. And he who urges this objection has not yet been touched by divine grace to that extent, and can hardly be fitted to come to the table of the Lord. But instead of glorying in it, he ought rather to humble himself in the dust for his self-righteousness, and pray that the spirit of the publican may replace in his heart the pride of the Pharisee.

And then the evil thus objected to is here only until the harvest. Not one unworthy partaker will sit down at the feast above. We ought to pity them instead of allowing their failure to become a stumbling-block to us, for of all sinners, the fate of the religious hypocrite will be the worst.

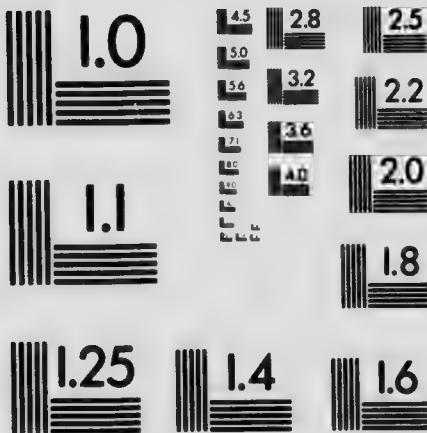
4. *Fear of the world* keeps many away from the Lord's Table. They feel that by professing their faith in Christ they will be making pretensions of superiority to others. They cannot endure such a thought themselves, and they dread the scorn that such action will bring. It is said that a British soldier who will rush fearlessly up to the cannon's mouth, is afraid to be seen on his knees. The same fear keeps many away from the Lord's Table.

Why are men thus ashamed of Christ? The Mohammedan never blushes for his faith. The Roman Catholic is never ashamed to be found praying. Wherever religion is a matter of forms and ceremonies, of prejudices and dogmas, men glory in it, but wherever it is a matter of the heart, men are ashamed of it. We always blush for an affection. Paul felt the temptation, although he overcame it. (Rom. 1: 16). He knew Timothy would feel it. (II. Tim. 1: 8). And many fall before it now. But it ought to be overcome. A young man will blush for an affection, and the deeper his love the greater his confusion when it is discovered. But let there be a cause for acknowledgment, or any reproach cast on the object of his love, and his whole manhood will move him to own the devotion he feels. So it ought to be with our love for Christ. When in our hearts we rest on him for salvation, and when He is to us "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," every inclination to secrecy should be trampled under foot as unworthy, and our Saviour should be confessed before the world. Those who



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would have Christ acknowledge them as His saved ones on that day, must confess Him as their Saviour here. (Matt. 10: 32, 33).

As for making religious pretensions, if we have faith we must make it known. In no other way can it develop and mould our lives. The world's sneers cannot last unless we give them cause for them. The only ground on which they can rest is an ungenuine profession. If our profession is only the manifestation of a faith and character really ours they will honor us in heart even while they scoff, and will soon admit their esteem.

We need courage. The true soldier of Jesus Christ must endure hardness. When He bore the scoffing and scourging, the crown of thorns and the cross for us, we can surely endure the little in our way for Him. We are not worthy of our heritage unless we are ready to suffer for His name.

5. *The unsatisfactory state of their feelings keeps others away from the Communion feast.* Some do not feel sorry enough for their sins. Others are so cold in heart. They have none of the warmth of love, nor of the devotion and enthusiasm which a Christian ought to feel. Others do not enjoy the means of grace, such as Bible-reading, prayer, public worship, etc., as they think they ought to do, while some feel generally dissatisfied with their condition, although they cannot point to anything wrong in particular.

The first concern of a person in that condition should be to find out if anything has come between

them and God. Is there any evil in your past for which restitution has not been made? Is there any sin in your present life which you are unwilling to give up? Is there any duty which God requires, and which you are not doing? If the spirit of God takes issue with you on any matter you must yield the point before you can find peace. Inactivity keeps many a soul in darkness, while earnest work for God will bring a rich blessing. Remove the cause of your unsatisfactory state if you can find it, and fulfil the conditions for a happy Christian life.

If you cannot find anything specifically wrong, or lacking, two things need to be remembered. First, one's religion does not depend on feeling, but on the attitude of the will toward Christ. If you have yielded the will to Him, your feelings will swing into line in due time. Next, if you are cold in heart, why not come to Christ to be warmed? Who would urge being cold as a reason for staying away from the fire? In personal fellowship with Christ and His people the emotions that ought to possess us will be found. And the highest point of this communion is reached at the Lord's Table.

Why do men make excuses at all for declining the Master's invitation? If they do not want to come why not say so and settle the question once for all? Because they do not want to refuse once for all? Nothing is farther from their minds than to exclude themselves forever from the feast of love. They offer excuses because they expect to come some time, and they want the way kept open. But

they wish to come when it suits their convenience, not when it is the Master's will. They desire to feast a little longer in the halls of pleasure, or at the tables of worldliness, or out of the troughs of lust, and when these can no longer satisfy them they will honor the Lord's Table with their presence. Such an attitude shows disrespect for the Master's invitation and for His zeal for righteousness. It is trifling with the offers of grace. If persisted in it will bring the irrevocable sentence of exclusion from the feast here, and the higher feast hereafter: "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper."

The whole parable implies that there is finality in the invitation. It is, come now or never. Those who wont come when God wants them, wont be allowed to come when they want to themselves.

